

THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

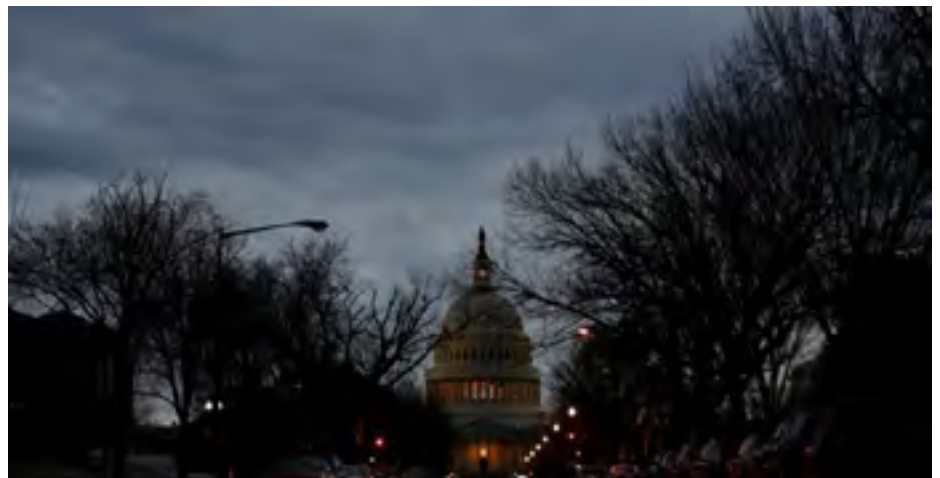
News from Montana's Conservation Districts

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Volume 12 Issue 2



US Government goes back to work after "lunch break" shutdown

US News & World Report: Thousands of federal employees breathed a sigh of relief on Monday after U.S. senators reached a deal to end a three-day government shutdown, turning their brief time away from work into what one scientist described as a "lunch break."

During shutdowns, nonessential government employees are furloughed, or placed on temporary unpaid leave. Those deemed essential, including those in public safety and national security, keep working.

Health scientist Tom Chapel was among the many who spent the day at home after being furloughed from his job at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

"It was essentially a lunch break," Chapel joked of the time he missed from work. "I'm a much more relaxed federal employee now that I have had a nice lunch break." [READ MORE](#)



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This newsletter is made possible by a grant from DNRC.



Ag Conference to Explore Ways to Reduce Feeding Costs

The Missoulian: Winter provides its own opportunities for the men and women whose lives focus on growing things.

Next week, western Montana farmers and ranchers will take that opportunity to gather in Missoula to learn about ways they can improve their operations and share their own experiences at the annual Western Montana Grazing and Agricultural Conference.

"It's always a great time for people to get together and talk amongst themselves about the new things they're trying and the challenges they face," said Natural Resources and Conservation District Conservationist Ben Montgomery.

The conference sponsored by the Lake County Conservation District and Natural Resources and Conservation features 30 speakers on Jan. 25-26 at the DoubleTree in Missoula.

"We'll cover tons of topics," Montgomery said. "There should

be something there for everyone involved in agriculture."

Last year, people were really interested in learning new ways to reduce feeding costs through the winter months. There was also an interest in alternative forage crops.

As a result, Montgomery said the conference features a number of local producers who have been successful in growing a second late-season crop for forage. Some local ranchers will also talk about their experience with putting out large bales of hay every few days in an effort to cut down on the amount of time spent feeding in the winter.

"We have a lot of people who are starting to plant a small grain early in the season that they harvest for hay and then plant a second forage crop that can be grazed in the fall," Montgomery said.

[READ MORE](#)

Mountain Pine Beetles in decline, but Douglas Fir beetles could surge

Helena Independent Record: Although Montana has turned a corner on the number of new forested acres infested with bark beetles, there's concern that one particular type of bug that thrives in burned trees could make a comeback after the summer's massive fires.

"When trees get fire-scorched they may not die, but they become susceptible to bark beetles," Amy Gannon, forest pest management program manager with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, told the state Land Board last week.

Of particular concern is the Douglas-fir beetle, which can establish itself and thrive in burned trees, then build up large enough populations to take over healthier forests.

"After the fires, we anticipate quite a bit of mortality. Trust land foresters are already preparing for this," Gannon said.

Montana has seen what Gannon called "a tremendous mountain pine beetle outbreak" in recent years, with some annual aerial surveys counting a million acres of new beetle-killed trees each year. Trees typically take a year to turn red after being killed by beetles, so there's a lag between an infestation and observation of dead trees.

[READ MORE](#)

DNA evidence, but no mussels, found in Tiber

Daily InterLake: Samples taken last year from Tiber Reservoir bolstered older evidence for the presence of invasive mussels.

In a press release Thursday, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks announced that samples of environmental DNA (eDNA) taken by it and the U.S. Geological Survey during 2017 indicated invasive mussels' presence in Tiber Reservoir.

In Fall 2016, the discovery of quagga mussel larvae and a shell fragment there triggered a massive effort to detect and contain the animals. Over the course of 2017, the press release states, "FWP and partner agencies collected more than 1,500 plankton samples from 240 waterbodies," including 128 plankton tow samples from Tiber and 147 at Canyon Ferry, where their presence is suspected.

Through these tests, "no adult mussels or larvae were found."

While mussel eDNA was found through separate tests in Tiber, the state cautions that this evidence is "not conclusive" about their presence, and says it plans to form a scientific advisory panel to guide eDNA's use in mussel detection.

In 2018, Fish, Wildlife and Parks says it will maintain inspection and decontamination requirements for all boats exiting the Tiber and Canyon Ferry reservoirs.

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What the Farm Bill means for urban, suburban, and rural America

From the A.P.: The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

Tom Vilsack, Colorado State University

Since the turn of the year, Congress and the Trump administration have been haggling over legislative priorities for 2018. Many issues are on the agenda, from health care to infrastructure, but there has been little mention of a key priority: The 2018 farm bill.

This comprehensive food and agriculture legislation is typically enacted every four or five years. When I became U.S. secretary of agriculture in January 2009, I learned quickly that the bill covers much more than farms and farmers. In fact, every farm bill also affects conservation, trade, nutrition, jobs and infrastructure, agricultural research, forestry and energy.

Drafting the farm bill challenges Congress to meet broad needs with limited resources. The new farm bill will be especially constrained by passage of the GOP tax plan, which sharply reduces taxes on the wealthy and large companies, and by concerns about the size of the federal budget deficit. Farm bill proponents will have to work even harder now than in the past to underscore the magnitude and impact of this legislation, and the ways in which it affects everyone living in the United States.

Of course the farm bill helps farmers, ranchers and producers. It provides credit for beginning farmers to get started. It protects against farm losses due to natural disasters through disaster assistance and crop insurance. It provides a cushion for the individual farmer if he or she suffers a poor yield or low prices, through a series of farm payment programs tied to specific commodities.

Agricultural trade is critically important to the bottom line for U.S. farmers, ranchers and producers. More than 20 percent of all U.S. agricultural production is exported. Agricultural exports are projected to account for one-third of farm income in 2017.

The farm bill authorizes market access promotion and export credit guarantee programs that are key for promoting exports and generating farm income from exports. These programs provide resources to exporting businesses to aggressively market American agricultural products overseas, and to enable exporters to price our products more competitively on the world market.

All of these provide a stable and secure supply of food for the nation. Along with efficient supply chains, they also allow us to enjoy relatively inexpensive food. On average, Americans spend less than 10 percent of their income on food.

[READ MORE](#)

Perdue asks Forest Service, other agencies to think as "OneUSDA"

The Missoulian: In his 2018 New Year's message, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced an accountability initiative that left current and former federal workers scratching their heads.

"So from today forward, you will hear all of USDA leadership, from the Office of the Secretary on down, begin to refer to us as OneUSDA," Perdue said in a video released on Tuesday, Jan. 2. "Not as APHIS or as the Forest Service, not as Rural Development or as FAS, and not as distinct agencies sitting in the same office, like FSA, RMA, and NRCS. [See related list of all the USDA agencies.]

"No, instead, we are going to be one team all working toward the same goals: OneUSDA. You may ask, and fairly so, 'What does this mean for me?'"

Perdue said more details will come over the next days, weeks and months.

A USDA spokesman said the move did not involve changing any agency names, logos or branding. It would not resemble the 2013 effort to standardize USDA logos and do away with the Forest Service's traditional pine tree symbol.

[READ MORE](#)

State to convene first-ever Water Summit

Scholarships available: Lend your voice to the conversation this March 6-7 in Helena

Have you ever wondered how earlier timing of snowmelt is affecting Montanans on the ground? What about how the state's growing population will affect you and how you use water? Are you interested in hearing stories from fellow Montanans who are creatively addressing these issues and more?

The 2018 Montana Water Summit, "Water in a Changing West," will convene diverse stakeholders involved in water management, policy, research and practice – from legislators to landowners – to discuss some of the most pressing current and future challenges with Montana's water quantity and quality.

The Summit will highlight impacts to the state's water identified in the just-released Montana Climate Assessment while also focusing on how population growth and a shifting economy influence water use and demand now and into the future.

You'll have a chance to talk with visiting Western water experts, meet fellow Montanans engaged in exciting on-the-ground adaptation, ponder the roles of policy, science, and management in Montana's water future, host a water-related conversation over lunch...and more.

Scholarships are available for watershed group and conservation district affiliates, graduate students, and interested community members. [MORE INFO](#)

Washington wildlife biologists consider using drones after Spokane-area moose test

The Spokesman-Review: On a snowy logging road near Sacheen Lake, Jason Hanlon stares intently at his iPad.

He's searching for a moose. Roughly 700 feet away, up a rugged wooded hillside, his drone hovers 390 feet off the deck. From that height, the trees and underbrush look like a painting – two-dimensional outlines and colors.

Then he spots her. A moose, bedded down in a patch of trees. Hanlon maneuvers the drone down until it's hovering roughly 50 feet off the ground. The video streaming back to the iPad is crystal clear. The moose occasionally glances up at the buzzing object. As the drone drops closer, she ambles away. Moose, with no natural aerial predators, don't care much about drones.

"OK," Hanlon said. "I'm going to come back. We did what we came to do."

He documented a moose. This week, for the first time, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife used a drone to survey moose populations in northeast Washington. The weeklong test will help determine how and if the agency uses drones in the future, a question wildlife biologist across the world are considering.

[READ MORE](#)

Meet the 2018 Big Sky Watershed Corps Members

Big Sky Watershed Corps is a program made possible by a partnership between SWCDM, Montana Conservation Corps, and the Montana Watershed Coordination Council. The program started in 2011 with 10 members and has grown to support 27 for the 2018 term.

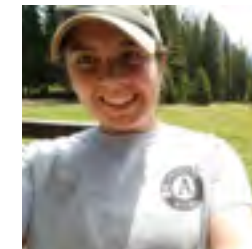
This program pairs a young professional with a Conservation District, Watershed Group, or other natural resource organization around the state. The Big Sky Watershed Corps member spends eleven months serving on projects determined by their host site. As you'll see from the bios below, they can do a range of projects for their host organizations, from developing outreach strategies, conducting canal seepage studies, or building a citizen science water monitoring program.

We think that it's a win win. The host site gets a new, energetic face in their office to help build capacity, while the young professional gets work experience, training, and contacts throughout Montana's natural resources community. Please join us in welcoming the 2018 cohort of members.



Angela Davis Montana Conservation Corps
bswc@mtcorps.org

Angela will be serving as the 2018 Big Sky Watershed Corps team leader with MCC. She completed a term of service in 2017 helping to facilitate community involvement and education while serving with Montana Aquatic Resources. Originally from Florida, Angela came to Montana for a visit in 2014 and was a resident by 2015. Angela holds a B.S. in Biology from the University of North Florida.



Kierra Davis Montana Watershed Coordination Council kierra@mtwatersheds.org

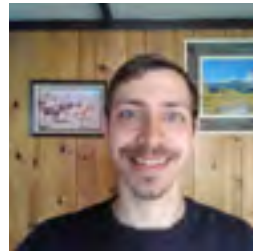
Kierra Davis is a recent graduate of Eastern Kentucky University with a Bachelors of Science in Wildlife Management and a Certificate in Geographic Information Systems. Kierra is active in professional organizations such as The Wildlife Society and passionate about the outdoors. She has served two terms of service with the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Montana and ready to serve another to better the community!



Tess Dubé Madison River Foundation tess@madisonriverfoundation.org

Originally from Albany, New York, Tess attended Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York for a degree in Mathematics. Since her graduation in 2015 she has worked in a multitude of settings including an environmental summer camp in the Adirondack mountains of New York, as an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) member, the Oklahoma United Methodist Church Disaster Response Corps, and El Rancho Cima, Boy Scout Camp. She recently spent a year working for the Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, GA.

Meet the 2018 Big Sky Watershed Corps Members



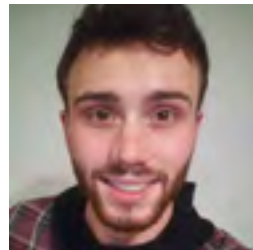
Graham Gaither *Blackfeet Tribe* bswc.grahamgaither@gmail.com

Born in San Antonio, Texas, Graham finished his BS in San Marcos, Texas in 2017. He has been utilizing his knowledge of Texas geography and biology to empower young students for years. He is expanding his knowledge base and is now utilizing those skills in serving with MCC and BSWC to empower the Blackfeet Tribe in Browning, MT. Graham enjoys hiking, reading science fiction, and listening and moving to the sounds of drum 'n bass music.



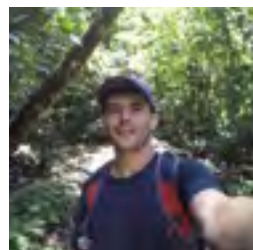
Casey Gallagher *Milk River Watershed Alliance* gallagher.mrwa@gmail.com

Casey is a returning Big Sky Watershed Corps member to the Milk River Watershed Alliance and is located in Malta, MT. Casey leads education and outreach activities within the Milk River watershed. She grew up in New Jersey, where she discovered her enthusiasm for environmental education working in a state forest. Casey grew her appreciation for agriculture while directing a farm-to-table luncheon at Siena College. If she's not in the office, Casey enjoys hiking, biking, and mushroom foraging.



Liam Goolic *Montana Aquatic Resources Services* lgoolic@montanaaquaticresources.org

Liam Goolic is originally from New Jersey. He has a B.S. in Biology with a minor in Environmental Studies from The College of New Jersey, where he specialized in researching invasive plant biology in suburban forests. Since graduating, he has served two AmeriCorps terms with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. His first term was with the Invasives Strike Force, where he sharpened his invasive plant knowledge. His second term was as a Trail Builder. He is looking forward to serving his third Americorps term with MARS.



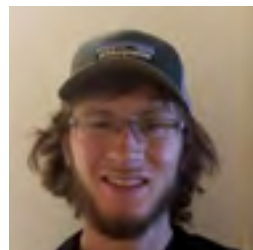
Andrew Horvath *Musselshell Watershed Coalition, Missouri River Conservation Districts Council, & Petroleum County Conservation District* PetroleumBSWCtwo@macdnet.org

Andrew Horvath came to Montana from Austin, Texas in 2017. Originally from New York, he has a B.S. in Environmental Science. He then earned a M.S. in Environmental Management with a focus in Ecology at St. Edward's University. For his thesis project, he collaborated with Dr. Lindsey Albertson at Montana State University and The Nature Conservancy to research the use of beaver mimicry structures to restore incised streams. Andrew's study site was located on Long Creek and Alkali Creek in The Centennial Valley.



Quincey Johnson *Wildlife Conservation Society* qjohnson@wcs.org

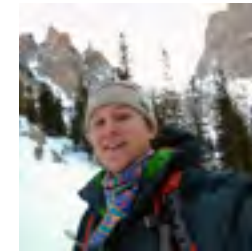
Originally from New Hampshire, Quincey attended Hobart and William Smith Colleges in the Finger Lakes of New York where she earned a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies. She has worked as a research technician studying forest ecology in Pennsylvania and Italy, and has studied amphibians and reptiles in New York and New Mexico. Most recently, Quincey worked as a naturalist for the Glacier Institute in Glacier National Park teaching environmental education to elementary and middle school students.



Aaron Kolb *Yellowstone River Conservation District Council* aaron.kolb@mt.usda.gov

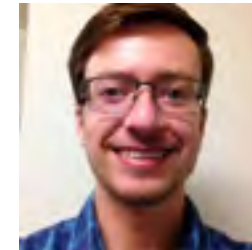
Aaron comes to Montana from the high deserts of northern Arizona. The dependence of his home region on the Colorado River, and the fragile state of that river, sparked Aaron's interests in developing watershed management strategies that meet human needs without compromising ecological health. Aaron holds a B.S. in Environmental Engineering from Colorado State University. During school he helped lead volunteers on river restoration projects with Wildlands Restoration Volunteers and worked with Larimer County to create new floodplain maps of the Cache La Poudre River.

Meet the 2018 Big Sky Watershed Corps Members



Andrew C. Kretschmer *Richland & Sheridan County Conservation Districts*

Andrew grew up in central Iowa, finding a passion for natural resources at a young age. After graduating from Iowa State with a degree in Forest Ecosystem Management, he took a field job with the Conservation Corps in Iowa. When that position came to an end he knew it was time for a change of scenery leading him to Montana. He looks forward to examining the impacts of fracking and other oil industry practices on the North Eastern portion of the state. Andrew is also excited to start exploring the state from his bicycle and hopes to spend some time on the Yellowstone River if he can find a kayak.



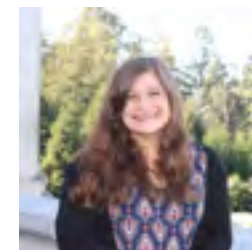
Mitch Lassa *One Montana/MSU Extension* mitchl@onemontana.org

Mitch will be helping create infrastructure for statewide conversations on water, agriculture, and climate as well as working for Extension's Climate Science Team. Originally from Wisconsin, Mitch graduated with a B.S. in Geology in 2016 from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Since then, he has interned as a hydrologist with the USGS in New York, traveled to New Zealand to volunteer on organic farms, and has served on a field crew with the Montana Conservation Corps. In his off-time, Mitch enjoys hiking, camping, canoeing, and cooking.



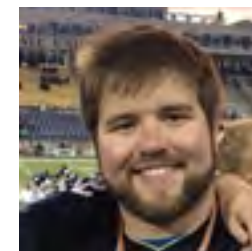
Jacob LeVitus *The Center For Large Landscape Conservation* jlevitus@blackfeetnation.com

Jacob grew up in Austin, Texas Jacob LeVitus and attended the University of Kansas to pursue his degree in environmental studies. After graduation, he completed an internship with the Natural Resources department for the Council of Athabaskan Tribal Governments in Fort Yukon, Alaska. In 2017, he served on a Field Crew with Texas Conservation Corps at American YouthWorks. This year, he will be working on a beaver mimicry project with Blackfeet Nation Fish & Wildlife.



Claudia Macfarlane *Ruby Valley Conservation District* claudia@rvcd.org

Claudia is from California's Central Valley and is excited to be a Big Sky Watershed Corp member serving her term with the Ruby Valley Conservation District. She comes to the program from University of California, Berkeley with a BA in Environmental Earth Science, a BS in Conservation and Resource Studies, and an enthusiasm for learning, ecology, and conservation. She is excited to be able to join the Sheridan community and explore Montana's beautiful landscape. In her free time you can find Claudia hiking, mushroom hunting, reading, or trying new local eateries!



Colin McClure *Musselshell Watershed Coalition, Missouri River Conservation Districts Council, & Petroleum County Conservation District* PetroleumBSWCone@macdnet.org

Colin McClure grew up on his family farm in Walla Walla, WA. After graduating from Montana State University with a BS in Soil and Water Science, he traveled to South America to "improve his Spanish"—but mostly to ski and trek around the Patagonia region. His affinity for water and conservation started on the farm and blossomed in the mountains. He loves to snowboard, mountain bike, kayak, whitewater raft, fish, and work with wood—his prize project being a strip built cedar kayak.



Taylor Mudford *Friends of the Missouri Breaks* taylor@missouribreaks.org

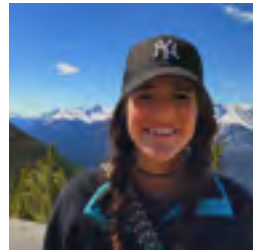
Taylor is a New York native and alumnus of the University of Hartford. Though he majored in history, a semester abroad in Australia inspired him to pursue a minor in environmental studies, which soon became his academic and personal focus. While serving with the Americorps program and working directly with the Friends, Taylor looks forward to applying his passion and zeal for the environment, conservation, and history to his work in spreading awareness of, and participating in hands-on conservation efforts in, the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument.

Meet the 2018 Big Sky Watershed Corps Members



Jack Murray *Gallatin River Task Force*

Jack was born and raised in Charlottesville, Virginia. He holds a B.S. in Natural Resources, as well as a Watershed Science Certificate which he received from Sewanee: University of the South last May. After his sophomore year, Jack spent a few months interning for the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority in Seguin, TX wherein he was exposed to water quality testing and water policy, sparking his interest in watershed science and conservation. Following graduation Jack worked as a Stream Survey Technician for the BLM/ USFS Aquatic Riparian Effectiveness Monitoring Program (AREMP) in Corvallis, OR.



Lauren Odom *Lake County Conservation District* lnodom@macdnet.org

Raised in Oklahoma, Lauren attended Oklahoma State University to complete her undergraduate degree. In her senior year, Lauren was selected as an Undergraduate Researcher. She worked alongside OSU and the Oklahoma DEQ to find a better standard for water percolation testing to determine septic system type. Lauren then graduated May 2017, with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science and a Focus in Water Resources. In her spare time, Lauren enjoys travelling and exploring as much as possible.



Michelle Pond *Gallatin Local Water Quality District and the Gallatin City-County Health Department* michelle.pond@gallatin.mt.gov

Originally from the California central coast, Michelle attended UC Berkeley, studying Environmental Engineering Science with a minor in Conservation and Resource Studies. After graduation, she spent a year with the Watershed Stewards Program, placed at the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, where she worked on surface water monitoring, creek restoration, watershed education in classrooms and facilitating community workshops.



Valerie Stacey *Lewis and Clark Water Quality Protection District* vstacey@lccountymt.gov

Valerie grew up in Michigan and attended college in Indiana where she focused on ecological research in a wide variety of environments, from the northern region of Wisconsin to an island off the coast of Panama. Striving to find a confluence between society and environmental science, her interest in natural resource management grew. After graduation, she moved to Wyoming where she worked intimately with river and stream systems as a technician for the Bureau of Land Management. When she's not in the office or the field, you can find her hiking in the mountains, birding, or reading.



Riley Stiljes *Montana Trout Unlimited & United States Forest Service*

Riley grew up in Wisconsin and is a cheesehead through and through. He graduated with an Environmental Geoscience degree from Northland College on the shores of beautiful Lake Superior. After graduation he worked for the Washington Conservation Corps for 11 months in Yakima and Ellensburg. There he completed multiple projects including riparian restoration, forest thinning and salmon habitat restoration. In his spare time Riley loves to ski, snowboard, longboard, kayak, disc golf, golf and much more.



Samantha Strable *Friends of the Missouri Breaks* sstrable15@ugf.edu

Samantha Strable is a Montana native and a graduate of the University of Providence (formerly known as the University of Great Falls). She currently is working on a Master's of Science in Environmental Policy and Management with a concentration in Fish and Wildlife Management. Her past experience includes working with the Wildlife and State Park branches of Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks. In her spare time you can find Samantha hunting, fishing, skiing, and enjoying Montana's outdoors. Now in Helena, Samantha is excited to be embarking into watershed conservation work.

Meet the 2018 Big Sky Watershed Corps Members



Paul Tran *Clark Fork Watershed Education Program* paul.tran@mso.umt.edu

Paul graduated from the University of California Santa Cruz with a degree in Environmental Earth Science and Anthropology. Out of college, he worked as a well-logging geologist primarily at oil sites in the Great Valley of California and geothermal sites in the Nevada Basin and Range. He then spent time teaching and tutoring kids in Thailand and Vietnam. He spent this past summer and Fall working with the Challis Bureau of Land Management as a Native Plant and Invasive Species Field tech, where he was involved with weed management, surveys, and habitat restoration.



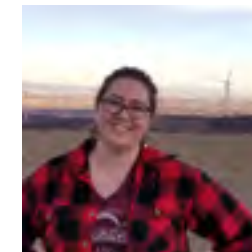
Aissa Wise *Bitterroot Water Forum* bswc.member@brwaterforum.org

Aissa is originally from Washington State but soon found her place in Montana while she was attending the University of Montana-Western, where she earned a BS in environmental science and geology. Passion for the natural world started at a young age and only grew deeper the more she learned through education, various environmental jobs and personal adventures throughout Montana and the Pacific Northwest. She most recently served as a Youth Conservation Corps Crew Leader with MCC based out of the Flathead Valley.



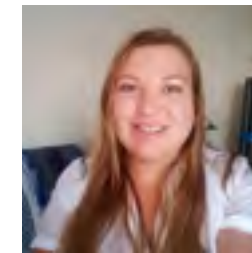
Brandi Bergreen *Missoula Conservation District & Missoula Weed District* bswc_mcd@macdnet.org

Brandi grew up in Southern California and earned a BS in Biology, with a concentration in field and wildlife biology from Cal Poly State University in San Luis Obispo. After moving to Missoula in 2017, she served as a Youth Crew Leader with MCC. She is excited to continue serving the communities in and around Missoula, this time as a BSWC member, by sharing her passion for conservation through education and outreach while expanding her knowledge of watershed health, protection and management.



Maggie Burnham *Crown Managers Partnership* bswc.flbs@gmail.com

I am originally from Anchorage, Alaska, but have been in Missoula for the past five years. I'm serving at the Flathead Lake Bio Station as part of the Crown Managers Partnership. I'm very excited to finally be doing something very close to what I got my Bachelor's in, which is Ecosystem Science and Restoration.



Abby Cutting-Smith *Lolo National Forest and Lolo Watershed Group* abby@lolowatershed.org

Abby Cutting-Smith grew up in the high desert of west Texas. Growing up in an area with very little water plus the influence of her father lead her to move to Montana in 2009 to serve as an MCC trail crew member then to interning on an organic farm in Northern Washington. She has a B.S. in Environmental Science with a focus on soil and water from Montana State University in Bozeman.

Grants

223, etc. Grant Deadlines

Deadlines for 223, mini-education, and district development grants from DNRC for FY 2018 are as follows: **October 18, 2017, January 16, 2018, April 25, 2018.** [Grant Info](#)

Healthy Watersheds Consortium Grants

The goal of this program is to accelerate strategic protection of healthy, freshwater ecosystems and their watersheds. Up to \$3 million is available and applications are due February 1, 2018. [More Info](#)

Grazing Lands Education & Demonstration Project Funds

GLCI is accepting applications for mini-grants and demonstration projects. Mini grant funds are for education projects to support awareness of grazing lands and natural resources; up to \$1000 per award. The current focus for demonstration projects is on innovative projects addressing grazing management, soil and rangeland health, concentrated animal feeding operations/animal feeding operations, or noxious weeds on private Montana grazing lands. Due February 16. [More Info](#)

Aquatic Invasive Species Grants

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Reclamation and Development Grants (RDG) Program 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. [More Info](#)

Partners in Flight Implementation Grants

The intent of the NGPJV PIF Implementation Grants program is to accelerate delivery or improve the effectiveness of conservation program and practices, to support sustainable habitats and declining grassland bird populations within the boundaries of the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture. Successful grants are meant to deliver projects contributing measurably to the protection, restoration or enhancement of prairie grassland and/or shrub-steppe habitats used by one or more of the following five species: Baird's Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Lark Bunting, McCown's Longspur, and Sprague's Pipit. [More Info](#)

Events, etc

Save the Date: Montana Water Summit

Join a diverse group of water users, community members, policy-makers, scientists, and natural resource managers for thought provoking sessions on managing and adapting to changing pressure's on Montana's water supply. March 6-7, 2018. [More Info](#)

***DNRC has announced that they have some money available to sponsor Conservation District representatives to attend. Contact Ann Schwend aschwend@mt.gov for more info.

Montana Storm Water Conference

Join us, May 1-3, 2018, in Bozeman, MT, for the 2018 Montana Storm Water Conference. This is a time to gather, share, learn and collaborate on storm water and water quality issues with your local, regional and national colleagues.

Why Participate? Attendees will learn about storm water program planning and management, water quality planning and monitoring, and Best Management Practice case studies. Special emphasis will be given to sustainability topics such as asset management, land-use planning, green infrastructure, low impact development, and funding mechanisms. Special training sessions will expand opportunities for attendees to Learn, Network, and Participate! [More Info](#)

Jobs

Coordinator: Sun River Watershed Group

This position is a part time or full time position, responsible for the daily management of the organization, including fundraising, budgeting, program planning and implementation, staff and independent contractor supervision, program oversight, office management, and complying with the legal responsibilities of non-profits. The Coordinator works in close partnership with the Sun River Watershed Group Executive Committee. [More Info](#)

Coming Up

January

25-26 Western Montana Grazing & Agriculture Conference

29-31 NACD Annual Meeting

February

6-7 Winter Grazing Seminar

12 MACD Board Committee Call

13-15 Transboundary Grasslands Workshop, Glasgow

13 Attaining & Maintaining Soil Health Workshop, Wibaux

26 MACD Exec. Committee Conference Call

27 CMR Community Working Group Mtg

March

6-7 Montana Water Summit

Have an event to share?

Visit macdnet.org/calendar to add your event to our list!

Study: Montana Lost \$240 Million in tourist spending due to forest fires

Bozeman Daily Chronicle: The fires that charred large swaths of Montana over the summer discouraged hundreds of thousands of tourists from visiting the state, resulting in a \$240 million loss in visitor spending, according to a new report.

Preliminary data released by the University of Montana's Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research estimates that tourists in Montana spent nearly \$3.3 billion in the state this year, supporting more than 53,000 jobs. But both numbers would have been higher if not for the fires and smoke that blanketed much of the state through the summer — by far the height of the tourist season — according to a second report released Tuesday by the organization.

Fires burned more than 1.2 million acres of Montana land in 2017, according to the Northern Rockies Coordination Center. Firefighting efforts cost the state in the neighborhood of \$400 million. [READ MORE](#)

Exempt Water Rights Questions to be answered at meetings

KXLO: Several months ago all Montana land owners received a form to file for Exempt Claimed Water Rights. This is an important opportunity to file on rights for livestock drinking directly from natural water sources, and domestic and stockwater wells put to use before July 1, 1973.

The meeting will feature Jim Beck, retired from the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's Helena Regional Office where he worked in several water resource areas, including water rights. Jim has been a member of the Broadwater Conservation District for 26 years, and for the past 20 years he has been an instructor for the State's water commissioner training program. Jim will discuss the exempt claim filings in detail and will explain the consequences of the loss of priority date if the filings are not made. He will also describe how to search for previous water right filings, provide resources for completing the claim forms, and explain what to expect from a consultant.

Fort Benton – 1:00 pm on 1/22

Malta – 6:00 pm on 1/23 at the Malta Business Center

Glasgow - 1:00 pm meeting on 1/23

Lewistown - 4:00 pm on 1/25 at the Council on Aging Building

Winnett - 12:30 pm on 1/26 at the Methodist Church

Jordan - 5:30 pm on 1/26 at the Summit Corral

Circle - 10:00 am on 1/27 during the Circle Ag Days

For more information on location, please contact the local Conservation District in the hosting county.