

THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

News from Montana's Conservation Districts

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July 19, 2017

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Bee & Butterfly Heaven: Lake CD encourages pollinator plantings

From the Missoulian: MOIESE — Ben Montgomery took a stroll through bee and butterfly heaven the other day.

Along the way, the National Resource and Conservation Service Lake County district conservationist counted 14 species of flowering plants and grasses that would provide a smorgasbord for both bees, butterflies, cows and all sorts of wildlife.

"This is amazing," Montgomery said as he searches through the nearly neck-high stand of grass, legumes and forbs on the Foust Farm near Moiese. "Just imagine how good of habitat this is for all kinds of wildlife."

The restored wetland is one of the largest examples of a relatively new initiative of the Lake County Conservation District to create new habitat for the insects vital in pollinating fruits and vegetables.

"One out of every three bites of food that we take, we can thank a pollinator for it," said Heidi Fleury, the Lake County Conservation District's conservation coordinator. "We know how important they are to preserve."

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SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
of MONTANA



MONTANA ASSOCIATION of
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS
We're growing Montana's future.

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Eastern MT counties designated primary natural disaster areas

From AgUpdate: Hot and dry conditions this summer continue in eastern Montana, where hay is short, pastures are turning brown, and the best crops are fair, but heat-stressed.

Every week, more counties are being added to the natural disaster list, which allows farmers and ranchers in those counties to be eligible for low-interest loans and other Farm Service Agency emergency programs.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has designated Daniels, Garfield, McCone, Roosevelt, Sheridan, Valley, Dawson, Fergus, Petroleum, Phillips, Richland, Rosebud, Fallon and Wibaux counties in Montana as primary natural disaster areas as of July 13 due to losses and damages caused by a recent drought.

Neighboring counties in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota also qualify for natural disaster assistance because they are contiguous counties.

Jeff Chilson, Montana State University Roosevelt County agent, based in Plentywood, Mont., said they have had less than 60 percent crop emergence in his county due to a lack of rainfall since April 1.

[READ MORE](#)



What works for wildlife is also better for Montana rancher and her cows

From On Pasture: On the Endecott Ranch near Ennis, Montana, cows are number one. From calving through weaning, and throughout the long, harsh winters in the Madison Valley, Janet Endecott's Red Angus and Herefords receive the best of everything.

"We've got this operation set up so it works just right for the cows," says Janet. "In order to keep them happy and healthy, you need good land and water."

The nexus for happy and healthy on Janet's place is South Meadow Creek. Originating in the southern Tobacco Root Mountains, the stream meanders through the heart of the ranch's main pastures. On days of extreme heat or bitter cold, native willow thickets – a rancher's best friend, Janet says — offer her cows shade or shelter from frigid winds; water from the creek irrigates the pastures; and at all times, there's drinking water, the single most important nutrient for a cow.

So when Sunni Heikes-Knapton,

Watershed Coordinator for the Madison Conservation District (MCD), sat down with Janet and Bob Endecott to present her ideas for improving the stream, Janet's initial response was, "You want to do WHAT?!"

Sunni proposed fencing the stream corridor on each side, creating a long, narrow riparian pasture of about four acres. Janet's two largest pastures would be configured, north and south of the creek. Her cows would no longer drink from the stream unless they were in the riparian pasture, and they would only be in that pasture for a very short time in the fall. Instead of getting water from the creek, the cows would use water tanks, situated away from the creek, one in each pasture.

Traditionally, Janet's cattle enjoyed a particular stretch of the creek, where they massed together, going in and out of the water to drink. Over many years their unimpeded activity had worn down the stream banks bottom. [READ MORE](#)

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Rekindling the Flame: Research shows advantages to burning Northern native prairie

From the John Deere Furrow, by Martha Mintz: Fire has long been for fighting on the native prairies of the Great Plains states, but recent research is looking to change that mentality. Lance Vermeire, a rangeland ecologist at Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory in Miles City, Montana, has spent over a decade clearing the smoke on the benefits and best practices of prescribed burns on native northern mixed prairie.

"Fire is an important process these rangelands have evolved with. When we remove an entire process, things don't function the same," says Vermeire. "In

our region a lot of people have experienced the scary side of fire. While they can appreciate the benefits they see after, they don't have the confidence to do prescribed burns like we see in other prairie regions."

Due to fire's blackened reputation in Great Plains states, Vermeire estimates the area is 30 years behind on fire research basics, such as timing and how the plant community will respond to fire as compared to the Southern Plains states where burning pastures is a regular practice.

Vermeire's research has challenged misconceptions about fire, proven out benefits and established

management strategies for prescribed burning. Fires are like hitting a pasture reset button. Many native grasses respond positively to burning while woody and weedy plants decrease. "We see higher forage quality after a burn and animals favor burned areas," Vermeire says. When a fire occurs, there is essentially a rapid decomposition of plant matter releasing a glut of nutrients in a short span of time, he explains. The plants take up these nutrients and soil microbes kick into overdrive cycling nutrients faster. This adds up to high quality forage.

[READ MORE](#)

Butte teen initiates project to protect Silver Bow Creek

MT Standard: Teenager Taryn Stratton is a good example of how a single drop of water can have a ripple effect.

Taryn, now 14, is getting ready to leave her mark on Butte in a way that's unusual for someone her age. The Butte native, angler and hunter is getting ready to help raise awareness to protect Silver Bow Creek.

And she made a power point presentation, all by herself, to deliver to the state to do it.

The state is awarding Taryn \$1,278 to put 300 decals on storm drains across Uptown Butte this summer. Taryn received her letter from

Gov. Steve Bullock informing her of the award late last month. Bullock called Taryn "an inspiration to not only the young people of Butte but also to the people of Montana."

The money will pay for the markers, the adhesive and a wire brush to scrape the pavement before application.

She plans to begin the project of putting the markers on each storm drain along Uptown Butte — from Shields Avenue to Emmet Street and from Mercury to Quartz Street — later this summer. The markers are intended to remind residents that what goes down a street's drain winds up in Silver Bow Creek. [READ MORE](#)

Lincoln area earthquake sets off 1,500 smaller aftershocks; increases spring flows

From the Missoula Current: In the week following Montana's largest earthquake in more than 50 years, seismic meters registered about 1,500 smaller quakes in the same area.

The first, 5.8-magnitude quake struck at a depth of three miles, just outside Lincoln — about 80 miles east of Missoula.

The aftershocks started shortly thereafter, with the first registering as a magnitude 4.9.

Some of the past week's quakes were standalone events, said Michael Stickney, senior research geologist and director of earthquake studies at the Montana Bureau of Mines and

Geology in Butte.

However, 90 percent of them were related to the July 6 temblor, which was considered a "moderate" quake by international standards, he said.

"It (the cluster of aftershocks) is fairly typical," Stickney said. "Of course, this includes lots of very tiny earthquakes which are probably too small for people to notice."

There have been two reports of increased water flow from natural springs near Nevada Lake, he said. This is a common report following earthquakes, and the flow should normalize eventually.

[READ MORE](#)

Consider filing for "exempt" water rights

From MT Stockgrowers: Water rights are a property right critical to agricultural production, that water users need to protect.

In the early 1980's, at the beginning of the adjudication process, the Montana Supreme Court issued an order that all water users who wanted to claim a right to use water that was put to use before 1973 had to file a claim with the Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC). The Court did, however, provide two exceptions to this requirement — instream stock use and domestic use — that was used prior to 1973. These are the "Exempt From Filing" Water Rights that we now have the chance to address.

This year's passage of HB 110 provided a means to protect these property rights by clarifying the opportunity to file a claim for any "exempt" instream stock or domestic rights that were put to use prior to 1973, and that have not been claimed in the adjudication process.

It is important that we recognize the significant opportunity that this provides to Montana's water users because it most likely will not occur again in the future.

Remember, it is not mandatory that you file; and if a water user chooses not to file for their pre-1973 "exempt from filing" claims, they do not lose their water right, but those rights will be subordinated to all other water rights on the stream. [READ MORE](#)

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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](#)

DNRC RRGL Program

The Renewable Resource Grant and Loan program will be accepting planning grant applications July 1st through September 1st, 2017 through www.fundingmt.org. The program information can be found on the [DNRC website](#)

Western States WUI Grants

The Montana DNRC Forestry Division announces that the application period for the FY2018 Western Wildland Urban Interface Grant Program is now open. Closes August 15. [More Info](#)

Events

Jim Gerrish Sustainable Grazing Workshop

Ranchers Stewardship Alliance is hosting a sustainable grazing workshop at the matador Ranch, featuring Jim Gerrish. September 19. [More Info](#)

Montana Range Tour

The 2017 Tour will take place in Petroleum and Fergus County areas, where we will focus on large landscape projects, conservation easements, new technology for monitoring water and cattle, grazing management, and soil health. September 6-7, Lewistown. [More Info & Registration](#)

SAVE THE DATE Area Meetings

The 2017 MACD Area Meetings will be on the following Dates: Sept 18th - East Glacier (3) | Sept 20th - Culbertson (1) | Sept 21st - Ekalaka (2) | Sept 22nd - Harlowton (4) | Sept 26th - Missoula (5) | Sept 27th - Butte (6)

Jobs, etc

Administrator, Stillwater CD

Stillwater Conservation District in Columbus, MT is seeking a new district administrator. Closes July 31.

Fuels Reduction Manager, Lower Musselshell CD

LMCD is looking for a fuel reduction project administrator with knowledge of forestry, fuel reduction for defensible space, fuels and fire behavior. Part time, Flexible hours. \$15-\$20/hour DOE plus mileage. Contact donna.pedrazzi@mt.nacdn.net or 323-2103 ext. 101.

MARS Seeking new board members

Montana Aquatic Resources Services is seeking passionate, dedicated people who are interested in protecting Montana's streams, rivers, and wetlands to serve as board members. Contact weaver@montanaaquaticsources.org with questions.

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@macdn.net.



SOIL HEALTH WORKSHOPS

JANUARY 2018

Featuring Brendon Rockey, Steve Kenyon,
Wendy Taheri, & Denek Axten

JAN.16 THREE FORKS · JAN.17 GREAT FALLS
JAN.18 BILLINGS · JAN.19 MILES CITY & SIDNEY

PRESENTED BY SWCDM & NRCS | SWCDM.ORG/SOIL-HEALTH

Coming Up:

July

24

MACD Executive
Committee Meeting

26

Range Monitoring
Workshop, Moore

Glacier County Annual
Crop Tour

28

Cover Crops in Montana
demonstration, Boulder

August

1

Organic Agriculture
Webinar

1-2

Ranching/Farming for
profit, Winnett

8

Soil Health Series Webinar

14

MACD Board Conference
Call

28

MACD Executive
Committee Conference
call

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

SAVE THE DATE

for the
Montana Association of Conservation Districts
Annual Convention

Bozeman, November 14-16

Holiday Inn

Reserve your room at a discounted rate now by calling
(406)587-4561 and mentioning MACD room block.

Reminder:

If your district has a resolution or bylaw changes that you want to be considered at the 2017 MACD Convention, it needs to be approved by the local district by **September 1**.

This way, we will have time for other local districts to review the proposals before they are asked to vote on them at the area meetings in September and at the convention in November.

That means your August meeting is a good time to talk about resolutions and bylaws!