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2012 Noxious Weed Fundraiser
August 4, 2011

Ranchlands Quest

Working collaboratively to enhance production agriculture, open space, resource stewardship, wildlife, and habitat management.

Newsletter of the
Madison Valley Ranchlands Group
Volume 10 - Issue 1 - Winter 2011-2012

MADISON VALLEY AND STREAMSIDE PROTECTION

On October 25, 2011 the Madison County Commissioners met to make a final decision on what action to take regarding the proposed Streamside Protection Zoning Ordinance. The ordinance is the result of several years of community, committee and planning board input. The proposed ordinance designates a 500 foot jurisdictional area for streamside buildings. The buildings could not be closer than 300 feet to the river and there would be a 150 foot non-disturbance zone from the river's edge to any disturbance of vegetation or soil. In the case of properties of less than 500 feet width then buildings sites would be evaluated to determine where they would have the least impact on the river and riparian area.

The commissioners decided to accept the proposal as a recommendation not an ordinance. Commissioner Happel felt that anything regulatory is not in keeping with property rights or the US Constitution. Both he and Commissioner Hart felt that people will always do the right thing if left alone. Commissioner Schulz said that because those supporting and those opposing the ordinance were fairly evenly numbered it was difficult to make a decision. Therefore, having it as a recommendation somewhat served both camps.

So, what we end up with is no action at all. People can continue to build as they please and ignore recommendations that are based on science. There is no oversight or meaningful accountability for the county to protect our rivers and streams from degradation and

impairment. We will watch folks build and develop up to the river's edge without any regard for the lasting impact on future function

BACKCOUNTRY WEED MAPPING

The Madison Valley Ranchlands Group has been tentatively approved for funding from the Resource Advisory Council to provide back country weed patrolling next summer. Those involved will be volunteers who will travel Forest Service, BLM and game trails horseback and on foot to find and map noxious weed infestations. If there are just scattered weeds that can appropriately be pulled, then the volunteers will do that. Most of the work will be GPS mapping so the Forest Service can spray larger infestations.

Large portions of Federal lands are weed free. It is hoped that this effort will minimize noxious weed encroachment into those weed free expanses.

What will make the project successful is the participation of local volunteers who are willing to spend time riding into the back country of the Tobacco Roots and the Gravelly Ranges. These would be day trips, so pack a lunch, a GPS, bear spray and a camera. Hikers could also participate.

We invite anyone who has an interest in participating in this project to call the office and let us know. That phone number is 406-682-3259. We are looking forward to working with you on this important project.



Members of the Madison Stream Team participate in training on correct water monitoring methods

he has worked to develop reports and figures from field data collected by volunteers on the Madison Stream Team and Madison Weed Mapping Project. A presentation of the Madison Stream Team report and its findings will be given in January and GIS maps displaying the results of the Madison Weed Mapping Project have also been created.

William will continue to work with and expand the volunteer monitoring programs by training volunteers, collecting and analyzing data, recruiting new volunteers, and bringing the monitoring program to the school for all grade levels. He will also be working on other outreach projects, such as the development of the Good Thymes Summer Camp, a natural resource and sustainable agricultural themed summer camp for elementary school kids, and a Conservation Planting Program.

State program awards placement to local organization

Conservation work in the Madison Valley now has one more champion, thanks to the placement of an AmeriCorp member to the Madison Watershed Partnership. As part of the Big Sky Watershed Corp, William “Robby” Robertson will be living in the community through August working on a variety of program tasks.

The Big Sky Watershed Corps is an AmeriCorps program created to assist Montana’s watershed communities to make a measurable difference in local conservation efforts while also providing an opportunity for recent college graduates to gain real world experience. The focus of the BSWC members will be on watershed research, planning and project implementation, watershed education & outreach and community engagement.

A total of 10 members were selected from a strong applicant pool and assigned to host sites throughout the state. During

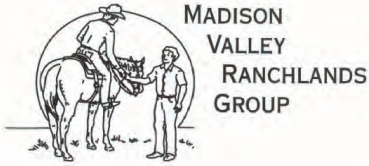
their 10.5 month term of service, members must work collectively to meet a demanding list of program objectives while also working under the direct supervision of the host site supervisor to accomplish the specific goals of the host site.

The Madison Watershed Partnership here in Ennis was accepted into the program as a host site for the inaugural BSWC program and assigned Robertson in October 2011. Robertson, a recent graduate of Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama, received a degree in Biosystems Engineering with a focus in Forestry this previous spring. He has worked under the Craig District Silviculturist in the Tongass National Forest and volunteered as a stream surveyor with a water resource group in Auburn.

Now living and working in Ennis, William will work to meet the goals of the Madison Watershed Partnership. So far

*Thank
you*

Thank you for your continued support! Our schedule for membership renewals is spring, fall and the Annual Weed Committee Fundraiser registration. We would like to express deep appreciation for all who have renewed their membership and were generous in their donations. We sent out the renewal letters in October for the fall campaign and by the end of December had received \$8,335. We will be sending out the spring renewal letters in April for those whose membership expires during the first half of the year. We recognize the Nelson Family Foundation for their generosity in donating \$5,000 during the fall campaign. Their generosity and support is greatly appreciated and beneficial.



MVRG Welcomes 2 New Board Members

The Madison Valley Ranchlands Group is pleased to welcome two new members to their board. George Boyd and Bart Story join MVRG President John Crumley, Kirby Alton, Gary Clark and Lynn Owens. Board members volunteer their time to contribute to the vision, goals and workings of the MVRG.

George Boyd

George was born near Four Corners, MT and raised near Wilsall, MT on the family ranch. He spent his growing up years working for his brother Ellis on the Boyd Angus Ranch, located at that time NE of Wilsall. After graduating high school he attended MSU, studying Ag-Business. In 1982 he married his wife, Muriel. They continued working for Ellis until 1990. During that time their three boys, Bridger, Nate and Tucker were born. In the fall of 1990 George took a job on a large irrigated hay farm located in Moses Lake, WA. While there he also backgrounded calves for the El Oro feedlot. Their daughter Kelci was born in 1992. Shortly after her birth a chance came up to move back to Montana to work on the Lazy SR ranch, located near Wilsall. George spent the next 17 years working there, managing it the last 10 years. In Dec. of 2005 daughter Ravyn joined the family. They were blessed to be able to adopt her in 2007. In August of 2009 George was presented with the opportunity to manage the Bar 7 ranch near Ennis. The challenge of moving to a much bigger place and the chance to work for someone who loves Agriculture made the decision easy. The Bar 7 is located right by the ranch that George's Dad managed many years ago.



Picture includes Lyndell, Bart, Walker and Chance

Bart Story

Bart was raised in Walden Colorado on a high elevation cow-calf /yearling operation. After high school Bart attended Lamar Community College and received an Associates of Ag Business degree. He and Lyndell were married in 93 and lived on the ranch in Walden for a year until they started working on ranches in WY and Colo. Bart worked in Greeley, Colorado for a feedlot taking care of the grass cattle they ran in different states covering Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and northern New Mexico. The largest year

was 22,000 head of pasture cattle and the smallest was 12,000. After 9 years of the travel and not being home, Bart and Lyndell decided it was time to get back to the ranch life. They moved to Big Timber Montana and managed a small ranch for 3 years then moved to Wisdom MT and managed a 1000 cow and 1200 head custom grazing operation. The ranch sold after 4 years and the Story Family moved to Wyoming for a short period. When the opportunity at the Valley Garden Ranch became available, it was an easy decision for Bart, Lyndell, Chance and Walker to move back to Montana.



Picture includes from left to right, son Nate and girlfriend Lauren, Muriel, George, Ravyn and Kelci. Son Tucker and girlfriend Kaitlyn are in the backrow. Son Bridger, his wife Jen, and grandkids Clancy, Cleve and Cherish are on the right.

Wolves and the Madison Valley

It has been 10 years since the first major conflict between wolves and livestock in the Madison. In August 2001 the Sitz Ranch lost 10 head of calves in Antelope Basin. Prior to that time the issue of wolves was mostly philosophically based. Since that time the issue has become more personal and significantly more economical for many valley ranchers. It would be interesting to have a tally of how much livestock has been injured and killed locally during that period. It would also be nice to know how many wolves have been killed by Wildlife Services in response to those depredations. Unfortunately, that information is not available.

Litigation and legislation has been employed to push and pull wolf management to a point of limited toleration. It is still an extremely contentious situation and will be for a long time.

This year there is a wolf hunting season in Montana and Idaho. Montana's quota is 220. Achieving that level of wolf harvest seems unrealistic with the current season structure. It would probably be difficult to achieve that level of harvest with a year around hunting season.

Recently, Wyoming's wolf management plan was approved by the Federal Government. This was after it had been denied for the past several years. They have areas around Yellowstone Park where wolves are considered a Trophy Animal. In the rest of the state they will be predators in need of year around control. Their plan is a more logical management strategy to keep wolf numbers in check, maintain a level in line with Endangered Species Act criteria and also accommodate the impact on livestock. It will be interesting to see if Montana and Idaho make any

adjustments to their management plans to become more consistent with what Wyoming is doing.

The impact of wolves on wildlife has become a much more critical consideration over the past 3 or 4 years. Elk and moose numbers have decreased dramatically in many areas. These are the same areas where wolf numbers are high. We are seeing changes in elk movement and use of habitat here in the valley with the increase of wolves. Finding a balance with predators and ungulates is going to take much more effort and ecological integrity. It is not reasonable to think we can have that balance without serious consideration of the place and role of humans on the landscape and economy.



Land Ownership

The Montana Association of Conservation Districts has passed and sent on to the National Association of Conservation Districts several amendments. One that is of great importance is a moratorium on using Land And Water Conservation funds for acquisition of fee title lands. Taking lands out of private ownership has become a burden on taxpayers and a challenge for good stewardship of those lands. Also of great concern is the decrease in food production potential by putting lands into public ownership.

There is an effort by some organizations and interests to have more park and wilderness areas. The agencies that would end up administering these increased acres are understaffed and underfunded already. On one hand

we have agencies such as NRCS being funded and staffed to help increase the efficiency and productiveness of private lands. Often what can make farming or ranching more profitable is sufficient land base for economy of scale. That is not to imply that bigger is always better. There is an optimum level of efficiency with the implementation of best management practices.

On the other hand we have those with wildlife and anti-ranching agendas that are pushing for an ever increasing land base in public ownership. This has been tried in places like Russia and China with no success. Private ownership with fair markets has proven to be the most efficient and successful land management strategy and economic development model

tried. We would be wise to keep that perspective in mind as we look to future land use policies. If those on the land are doing well economically then the rest of the economy will follow suit. Our politicians would do well to look to their constituency's well being rather than just their own.





Ennis preschool students participate in a water quality lesson on Jack Creek.

Water monitoring programs finishes sampling, education events

The chances of striking up a conversation with someone well versed in water monitoring continues to increase in the Madison Valley, and it's certainly an important thing to be discussing.

"Despite high water and a late start to the field season, we got a lot of data collected and we did a lot of educating, too", noted Sunni Heikes-Knapton, Madison Watershed Coordinator and manager of the water monitoring programs. "It has been our best year yet".

Sampling completed by the Madison Stream Team, the local adult water monitoring program, is completed on 5 streams; Moore Creek, O'Dell Creek, North and South Meadow Creeks, and the West Fork of the Madison River. All volunteers in the program went through rigorous training during the year, and successfully completed the required sampling days. In all, fourteen adults were involved, with several new recruits to the program involved in the 10 days of sampling.

Because of it's accomplishments, the Madison Stream Team program was also included as a presenter in the statewide American Water Resources Association conference in October. An additional public presentation of the data from both projects will take place in Ennis during November.

Now in its sixth year, the Jack Creek program also continues to introduce water monitoring to area youth while collecting data throughout the drainage. During 2011, 7 sampling events took place and 94 kids aged 2-12 participated in education events.

When asked how her kindergarten benefitted from the lessons that took place at the Jumping Horse Ranch, Ennis teacher Lindsay Graden replied, "The activities were hands on and the kids loved it. I believe it enhanced their learning of science in the outdoors".

As with many wide reaching programs, there is a range of supporters that make it all possible. Madison Stream Team support comes from volunteers, landowners, the Madison Conservation District, Montana DEQ, and the MSU Extension water quality program. The Jack Creek project support comes from the Jack Creek Preserve Foundation, Madison River Foundation, Madison Conservation District, Montana DEQ, Moonlight Basin, Big Sky Resort Area District, Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Montana Inc, and the Yellowstone Club Community Foundation.

For more information on either the Madison Stream Team program or the Jack Creek monitoring program, contact Sunni Heikes-Knapton, mwc@3rivers.net.

Freedom and Restraint

As we consider the valuable resources of our valley and the interest many have in maintaining those resources, we must strike a balance and compromise that is difficult to achieve. How do we prevent impairment and degradation of natural resources and still respect the rights of those who have current ownership of property providing some of those natural resources?

The relationship between freedom and restraint has been at the core of human relationships for millennia. Wars and rebellions ebb and flow due to the varied perceptions of freedom and restraint. Our nation was founded because of the dispute of colonists and England over those principles. When there is freedom with no restraint the strong will always take advantage of the weak. The strong will be in the minority but will dictate their terms to the majority who lack the skill and resources to resist. Where there is restraint with no freedom those who rule will dictate the terms to the majority who will inevitably resist the situation.

The U. S Constitution was crafted to create an equitable balance of freedom and restraint with inherent checks and balances to prevent the natural course of government interference. It is a lofty but inspired document that has been copied by many nations. So far, no country has been able to duplicate the social and economic results which we have experienced as a nation.

Freedom and restraint is dependant upon the principle of personal accountability by the individuals involved. Accountability requires integrity and compassion of those individuals whether within a family, community or nation. There has been no historical record of a people that maintained

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MVRG continues to support the work and vision of Madison Farm 2 Fork. Both MVRG and F2F promote making our community more self reliant in producing and consuming local food products.

The geothermal greenhouse that F2F has built and operates is in the final stage of construction. An abundance of produce was produced during this past summer and marketed through the F2F Farmers Market. During December of this year the hot water plumbing and circulations system will be completed. Starting in 2012 the beds in the greenhouse will be heated facilitating much earlier planting of crops. The biggest challenge to this community effort is finding the funding to hire someone with the knowledge and experience required to maximize the production potential of the facility.

Aside from the greenhouse part of this vision is the need for local producers of crops, livestock and fiber to commit to marketing their products locally. In the long run this effort will do more to promote a stronger local economy with less capital outlay.



Campers participate in a lesson on soil structure at the 2011 Good Thymes Camp

Planning underway for local agriculture and resource camp

Summer in Montana is a spectacular time to enjoy the settings of the Madison Valley, and a prime opportunity to learn from them as well. Especially if you're a kid.

Thanks to a partnership of local organizations, area youth will have a chance to explore the world of agriculture, local foods, and natural resources, right here in Ennis. The Good Thymes Camp was developed in 2011 for elementary aged students.

In 2012, the camp is being offered again through the Madison Farm to Fork organization and the Madison Conservation District. Youth in grades 4-6 can attend the camp, which is planned for a full week each in the months of June, July and August. Options to expand the age classes are currently being explored to provide

lessons to younger participants as well.

Campers will participate in lessons and activities focused on topics important to the region; plant propagation, greenhouse operation, soil development, water resources, weeds and invasives, insects, and wildlife and habitat. Lessons will be taught on site at the Farm to Fork greenhouse and also include field trips to area agricultural production properties and public lands.

Camp was supported in 2011 by the Madison Farm to Fork, Madison Conservation District, Madison Valley Women's Club, Madison Valley Ranchlands Group, MVRG Weed Committee, local landowners, and the generous donation from John and Antoinette Scully.



Bob Sitz speaks during the educational tour at the 2011 fundraiser

13th Annual Noxious Weed Fundraiser

The Madison Valley Ranchlands Group's Weed Committee was pleased to hold the 13th Annual Noxious Weed Fundraiser on August 6, 2011. This year's event was held in Harrison, MT at the Sitz Angus Ranch. More than 300 folks came out and enjoyed a fun social hour, silent auction, dinner and live auction. Many came early in the day and enjoyed a tour hosted by Bob Sitz, highlighting the ranch's diverse cattle operations as well as some of the work they've done to enhance and protect the range and wildlife habitat.

All of the funds raised at the Noxious Weed Fundraiser are used to support the MVRG Weed Committee's many projects. The Weed Committee works to prevent and control noxious weeds by working collaboratively with both private and public entities. Many of the projects provide private landowners with technical assistance as well as cost-share. For questions about the fundraiser or ongoing projects, please contact the Weed Committee at (406) 682-3731.

a working society where there was freedom without restraint. The majority of the people will strive to make those circumstances work but there has always been a minority who will be dishonest and devious in their societal and family dealings. That has always been the cause for restraint. Restraint comes in the form of regulation and rules to protect those who are willing to do what is best for all involved. If there is no deterrent to inappropriate behavior and activity then that behavior and activity will expand. Those who promote freedom without restraint are either extremely naïve or have an agenda that is selfish and self serving. We cannot exercise personal freedom without an honest and equitable consideration of the freedoms of everyone else.

Those who are elected or appointed to public office generally take an oath to protect and promote the well being of society as a whole. History has shown that unfortunately, many in public office make decisions based on personal and self serving criteria. Our nation was established as a Republic, not a Democracy. Our Constitution provides the structure for a Republic to function for the freedom and well being of all its citizens. A Democracy is a matter of majority rule, even if the majority who approve something are in the minority of the citizenry. We see overwhelming and consistent evidence that we are functioning as a Democracy at the present. History has many examples of courageous individuals who stood up for what was right but not necessarily popular. Many gave their lives by standing up for what was right. What is popular and supported by the majority can never make something that is wrong into something that is right.

As we look for a brighter future in our communities, states and nation we must first of all be willing to exercise integrity and wisdom in our personal

lives. Then we must seek for those with such qualities to represent us in our community, state and national governments. It will take more time than we like to correct the circumstances in our government's functioning. Until, we, as individuals are willing to act honorably and be accountable for all we do, we cannot expect much change in our society and government.



2012 Weed Calendars are Still Available!

Calendars feature Madison Valley scenery and noxious weed education. They can be purchased at local businesses or by calling 682-3731. We will gladly ship anywhere in the U.S.

Another "Buggy" Year!



Madison Owens (left) and Taylre Sitz preparing to make a release

The 2011 season for Madison County BioControl was very successful. We once again made releases all the way from the Wade Lake Bench to Twin Bridges and to Cardwell. We found established populations of *Cyphocleonus achates* in many of our past releases. This was very encouraging to our program. We also collected over 16,600 *Larinus minutus* on our Madison County collection site which we released on other sites around the county. We made another trip to Darby, MT to collect *Cyphocleonus* and came home with 15,800 to release in Madison County. In all we made over 200 releases of *Larinus* and *Cyphocleonus* this summer. The support of Madison County landowners continues to

be strong for our program and we look forward to another summer.

This project is made possible through funding from the Madison Conservation District, Madison County Weed Board, Bureau of Land Management, Ennis School and the MVRG Weed Committee. Services are provided to county residents for free, but a \$20 donation per release is greatly appreciated. Donations help guarantee the continued operation of the project.

If you are interested in learning more about the possibilities associated with biological control insects, please contact the MVRG Weed Committee at 406.682.3731.

Will you join us in our efforts?

The Madison Valley Ranchlands Group works to protect the ranching way of life and the biologically healthy open spaces on which ranching depends.

Yes! I want to help the Madison Valley Ranchlands Group.

Please accept my tax deductible contribution of :

____ \$25 - \$100 ____ \$125 - \$250 ____ \$275 - \$500 ____ \$1,000
____ \$5,000 ____ \$10,000 ____ \$25,000 ____ other

**annual membership dues are \$25*

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PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

MVRG - P.O. BOX 330 - ENNIS, MT 59729

(406) 682 - 3259 MVRANCH@3RIVERS.NET

*The Madison Valley Ranchlands Group is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization
and deeply appreciates your financial support!*

