

THE MONTANA CONSERVATIONIST

News from Montana's Conservation Districts

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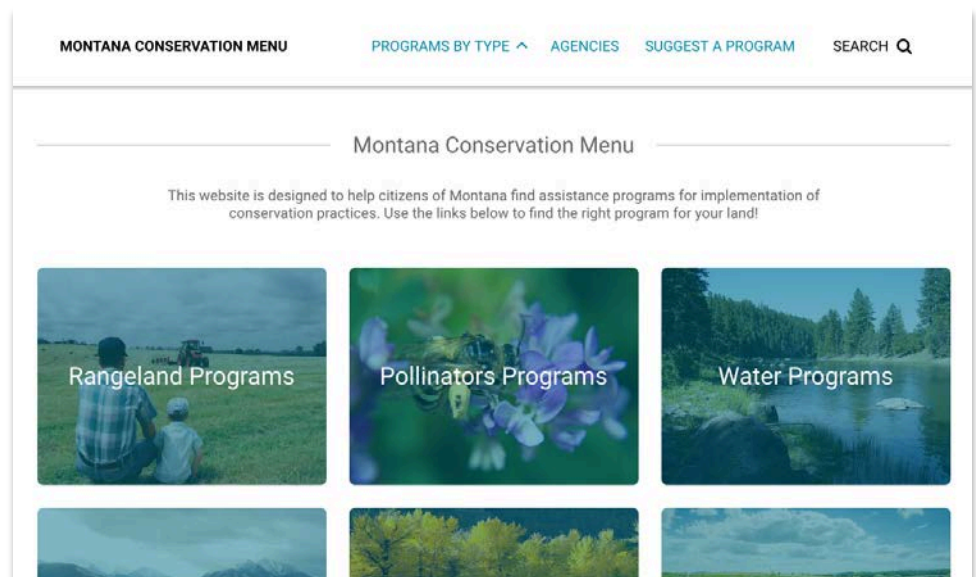
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1101 Eleventh Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
406-443-5711
www.swcdmi.org

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Introducing the Montana Conservation Menu

SWCDM is proud to introduce you to one of our most recent projects. The Montana Conservation Menu is a website designed to be a hub for finding information on Conservation Programs in Montana.

There are so many different organizations and programs targeting natural resource programs in Montana, we felt that it was time that there was a centralized hub to find and compare programs.

We like to think of it as 'shoe-shopping' for conservation assistance. We built the site so that you can narrow down the list of programs based on targeted resource (weeds, water, rangeland, forestry, pollinators, and soil); the type of assistance (grants, loans, cost-share, technical assistance, etc); the agency offering; or by many more specific tags.

Currently there are 58 programs on the site, and we are interested in adding more. Please check it out at www.mtconservationmenu.org, and if you have information to add, use this survey: <https://goo.gl/forms/AUpS4fP1HR9Rfvkj1>, or contact Kate Arpin at kate@macdnet.org.

NRCS: Snowmelt causes rising waters across MT, more to come

NRCS Press Release, June 6, 2017 – Rivers and streams are running high across the state of Montana from May snowmelt, and most have been above average for daily streamflows throughout the month. Data from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service showed that snowpack at high elevations in most basins peaked during the first week of May, but saw a rapid transition to melt shortly afterwards.

“The high pressure which dominated the weather patterns this month brought abundant sunshine, mostly dry conditions, and above average temperatures—the perfect combination for snowmelt,” said Lucas Zukiewicz, NRCS water supply specialist.

Some snow did fall in the high country over the month, adding to snowpack totals. SNOTEL (SNOWpack TELelemetry) sites along and east of the Divide were treated to up to 31 inches of snow on May 18, providing one last day of powder skiing for those that were motivated to hike for it, Zukiewicz said. More importantly, he said this storm also helped to slow the snowmelt which was occurring a little quicker than normal due to the persistent warm and sunny weather.

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Mussel infested boat found near Flathead

From the Flathead Beacon: A mussel-fouled boat was detected on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation on May 21 after inspectors found traces of the potentially devastating invasive species on a boat headed for Flathead Lake.

According to the Flathead Basin Commission, the boat came from Michigan, where invasive mussels have wreaked havoc on lakes. It was the first mussel-bearing boat to be intercepted in Montana this year.

Two other mussel-encrusted boats were detected in eastern Montana over Memorial Day weekend — one arriving from the Great Lakes area that was intercepted at the watercraft inspection station in Wibaux on May 26, and another that failed to stop at the Hardin inspection station on May 27 and was subsequently stopped by Montana Highway Patrol and ordered to return to the station.

On the Blackfeet Reservation on May 21, newly trained inspectors at the Seville Aquatic Invasive

Species Watercraft Inspection Station detected byssal threads associated with invasive mussel attachment near an intake on the boat. Invasive mussels use their byssal thread to attach to boats and can hitch a ride to mussel-free water bodies.

Jay Monroe, the Blackfeet Nation AIS Program Manager who trained the new inspectors, along with staff from the Flathead Basin Commission, said, “we don’t see boat props covered with hundreds of mussels much anymore. Instead, inspectors are more like detectives searching for small signs of mussel infestation, like byssal threads.”

Dona Rutherford, Director of the Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife Department, noted that the inspectors must be vigilant in order to detect mussel-fouled boats.

“It is concerning that a perimeter station did not detect and decontaminate this boat before it reached the borders of the Blackfeet reservation,” Rutherford said. [READ MORE](#)

A thriving Montana pulse crop industry

From Montana Department of Ag via Northern Ag Network:

As Montana cements its status as the nation's leader in pulse production, a duo of bills signed recently by Governor Bullock aim to advance the burgeoning sector of Montana's ag economy. HB 614 and SB 285 will incentivize growth in pulse-processing infrastructure throughout the state and give more structure to the state's pulse checkoff program. Montana leads the nation in pulse production, with over 1 million acres planted in 2016. Pulses (peas, chickpeas, beans and lentils) are a versatile crop that promote biodiversity, improve soil health and generate income from local and global markets.

"Agriculture is the backbone of Montana's economy, and these bills represent an investment in the continued growth of our state's pulse industry," said Governor Bullock. "Any time we can add a stop for our commodities before they leave the state, we are in turn adding value to those crops and impacting our state's economy in a positive way,"

HB 614 was signed on May 11th and aims to spur growth in the pulse-processing arena by exempting new pulse-processing equipment from property taxation. Processing Montana pulses in Montana adds value to the crop itself, while also

positively impacting the communities where it is happening.

SB 285 was signed on May 4th and establishes the Montana Pulse Crop Committee. The new committee will replace the current Montana Pulse Advisory Committee and give more structure to the state's pulse checkoff program. The committee will control the allocation of assessment funds, which are used to advance the industry through research, marketing and education.

"With the continued growth of Montana's pulse acres, now is the perfect time for us to incentivize new pulse-processing efforts," said Ben Thomas, Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture. "I look forward to working with the new pulse committee and doing my part to advance the industry."

The Montana Department of Agriculture's mission is to protect producers and consumers, and to enhance and develop agriculture and allied industries. For more information on the Montana Department of Agriculture, visit www.agr.mt.gov.

[READ MORE](#)

Yellowstone Park says its winning against non-native fish

Researchers trying to preserve native cutthroat trout in Yellowstone National Park say they are on track to eliminate non-native fish from Yellowstone Lake in about a decade.

The National Park Service is trying to get rid of lake trout, which were discovered in Yellowstone Lake in 1994, the Powell Tribune in Wyoming reported. Lake trout is a voracious species that feeds on cutthroats.

"They're a wonderful fish, but they just don't belong here," said Phil Doepke, a fisheries biologist who has been part of the cutthroat-trout conservation effort for 14 seasons.

Computer modeling indicates the lake trout population will collapse within 10 years, said Todd Koel, the park's senior fisheries biologist. "Lake trout are in decline, but it doesn't happen overnight," he said.

Researchers use nets to remove lake trout. They have removed 2.6 million pounds (1.2 million kilograms) since 1996, including more than 366,000 pounds (166,000 kilograms) last year.

They also locate and destroy lake trout eggs at spawn sites.

Biologists are finding more efficient ways to remove lake trout every season, Koel said.

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Montana Ag Summit brings heavy hitters to Great Falls

Elena Evans and Ann McCauley were at the Ag Summit last week, and reported that many CD supervisors, NRCS staff, and other familiar faces were in attendance. Thank you to everyone for going above and beyond to be sure Montana's interests are represented at the federal level.

Perhaps the greatest benefit Montana farmers and ranchers took home with them from the Montana Ag Summit was the national attention it delivered and a greater awareness in Washington, D.C. of Montana's importance to the U.S. farm economy.

"We have two of the nation's leaders; I would argue the nation's top two influencers of ag policy with us here today," said Montana Senator Steve Daines. "This is making a very deep impression on Sonny Perdue (U.S. Secretary of Agriculture) and Pat Roberts (Chairman of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee)."

Daines organized and sponsored the two-day event, bringing together what was probably the highest profile delegation of U.S. ag leaders to ever assemble in Great Falls for a single event.

"This is outside the beltway, outside the D.C. nonsense," Daines added. "They're here, face to face with folks wearing ball caps and cowboy hats."

Presentations and panel discussions carried on throughout the day, delving into topics as diverse as international marketing of Montana's agricultural products and commodity futures trading as part of a balanced financial portfolio.

But the real draw, which brought in more than 700 farmers and ranchers from across the state, was the chance to listen to and even speak with two of the nation's heaviest hitters when it comes to national farm policy.

"I'm a data-driven, facts-based, sound science decision maker who is absolutely impassioned and focused on customer service," Secretary Perdue said during his keynote address to the audience. "When you have dealings with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, I want to put a smile on your face that will make you say, 'if that's the kind of service I'm going to get I don't mind paying my taxes.'"

Perdue was confirmed as Ag Secretary by the U.S. Senate on April 24. On Thursday he repeatedly emphasized his goal to make the Department of Agriculture more customer friendly, and to amend or eliminate federal regulations that hamper farm and ranch production in the U.S.

"We are right now at the USDA cataloging and categorizing all the regulations that are impediments to your production capacity," he told the crowd.

"We're going to look at removing some of those, changing some of those so that when you get out of your pickup every morning you're not afraid you're violating some federal rule or regulation."

Eliminating excessive federal regulation was a constant theme on Thursday, with frequent reference to reining in the Environmental Protection Agency and abolishing the Waters Of The United States (WOTUS) act, which extends the EPA's clean water jurisdiction to small streams and wetlands across the United States.

[READ MORE](#)

Below: Elena Evans with Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue at the Montana Ag Summit.



Dry conditions in eastern MT threaten livestock water quality

From AgUpdate: A lack of precipitation in the southwestern and other western areas of North Dakota, and in eastern Montana are causing pastures and hay fields to start turning brown. There could be reduced hay crops and a lack of pasture regrowth if conditions don't change soon.

Water quality in stock ponds and other watering holes are in danger, as rainfall is needed to refill the dams.

"We are having water issues in the region," said Duaine Marxen, North Dakota State University

Extension agent in Hettinger County.

"There are reports of areas in southwest North Dakota where ranchers are checking their livestock water sources for peace of mind. As of this date there have been no reports of abnormal water quality."

Last year when the weather became dry in June due to a lack of rain in the western region of the state, a few cattle died from water quality issues.

[READ MORE](#)

USDA will help farmers adapt to climate change, says Perdue

From Successful Farming: Democratic lawmakers and farm activists criticized President Trump for his decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Treaty, Agriculture Secretary [Sonny Perdue](#) shrugged off climate change as inevitable and said USDA was "committed to digging ever deeper into research to develop better methods of agricultural production in that changing climate."

"Floods, droughts, and natural disasters are a fact of life for farmers, ranchers, and foresters," said Perdue in a statement. "They have persevered in the past, and they will adapt in the future – with the assistance of the scientists and experts at USDA."

[Cargill](#), one of the world's largest grain processors and foodmakers, said "We have no intention of backing away from our efforts to address climate change in the food and agriculture supply chains around the world, and, in fact, this will inspire us to work harder." Unlike Trump, who said the Paris Accord would hurt the U.S. economy, Cargill chief executive David MacLennan said, "It would have resulted in U.S. economic growth and job creation."

[READ MORE](#)

Missoula biological company wins landmark contract in Utah

CLEARAS Water Recovery to build advanced non-chemical nutrient recovery system

From Missoula Current: A biological company based in Missoula announced a significant milestone this week, landing a major contract with a Utah municipality where it will deploy its non-chemical technologies to recover phosphorous and nitrogen from the city's wastewater treatment plant.

[CLEARAS Water Recovery](#), founded and headquartered in Missoula, signed a contract with the city of South Davis to implement its Advanced Biological Nutrient Recovery system as part of a \$24 million upgrade to the city's wastewater plant.

"The project in Utah is a watershed moment for us," Andrew Gordon, the company's marketing development manager,

said Thursday. "It's going to be the first full-scale installation of our technology at a 4 million-gallon-plus capacity plant."

The nutrient recovery system will bolt on to the existing South Davis wastewater plant as part of a larger upgrade. Gordon said the company's technology scales to any size project and integrates seamlessly into the existing infrastructure.

Once in place, the CLEARAS system uses micro-algae to recover phosphorous and nitrogen while accelerating photosynthesis. The system produces clean, recoverable water in three separate phases and uses no chemical additives.

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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](#)

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](#)

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, northrup@mt.gov

Events

Bridger Plant Materials Center Field Day

Learn about the work the Bridge Plant Materials Center is doing during their annual field day. June 14. RSVP for lunch count by calling 662-3579 x100.

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 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.

Big Sky Watershed Corps HOST SITE

Applications now open!

Would you like to grow capacity at your organization? Then consider hosting a Big Sky Watershed Corps member in 2018. This program places college graduates in organizations across the state for 10 months, to help build capacity.

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.

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:

June

- 12-14** MACD / SWCDM Spring Board Meeting
- 13** Annual Spring BBQ, MACD Office, Helena
- 13-14** Four County Soil Health Range Tour, Conrad
- 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
Petroleum County Ladies Day on the Range

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

Meet our new SGI Range Conservationists!

Hayden Nelson is based in the Roundup Field Office

I was born and raised in Roberts, MT. My parents Stacey and George Nelson are both educators in the public school system. They encouraged me to pursue a career that I was passionate about so I would make a difference in the world.

My high school Science teacher, Mr. Jones was the first person to intrigue my interest in wildlife biology. My junior year of high school Mr. Jones added, Montana Wildlife, to our school's curriculum. The passion and adventure this class presented me with made me sure I wanted to extend my education in this field. I knew I had a unique attribute coming from a ranching community. I grew up learning the lifestyle of the people around me. I knew with this experience I could be a cohesive part in understanding a landowner's feasibility while keeping the needs of the range and wildlife in mind.

To further my education I pursued a bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Management and Rangeland Ecology at Montana State University. Post-graduation I received the opportunity to work in the partner position with SWCDM and NRCS. I could not have picked a better group of people to continue to learn and grow under. The two weeks I have spent in Roundup have been a truly eye opening experience, I cannot thank Ann McCauley and Austin Shero enough for this experience. I cannot wait to see what the future of this position holds for me as a manager and the future of the Sage Grouse Initiative as a whole.

Martin Townsend is based in the Malta Field Office

Hello, my name is Martin Townsend and I am excited to start work here in Malta. I grew up in Manhattan, Montana but have a connection to Phillips County through my mom's family. So it has been great to be up here so far. Family members have already had me out to help farm and ranch the first weekend I was here. I am getting ready for a busy summer both with my Sage Grouse Initiative work through NRCS and SWCDM as well helping out family.

I am a 2015 graduate of MSU in Agricultural Education as well as a graduate of Northwest College's Agriculture department in Powell, WY. Northwest college is where I became very interested in Range Sciences. I took every range class they offered and continued to take classes in the range and natural resource areas once I transferred to MSU. I spent two summers as a BLM seasonal collecting range inventory data here in Malta and another little while in Butte before taking this position. I also have some Conservation District experience from Gallatin County. So I am really excited to start in this partnership Sage Grouse Initiative position through NRCS and SWCDM.

Visit <http://swcdm.org/programs/sji-mt/> for more info on this program.